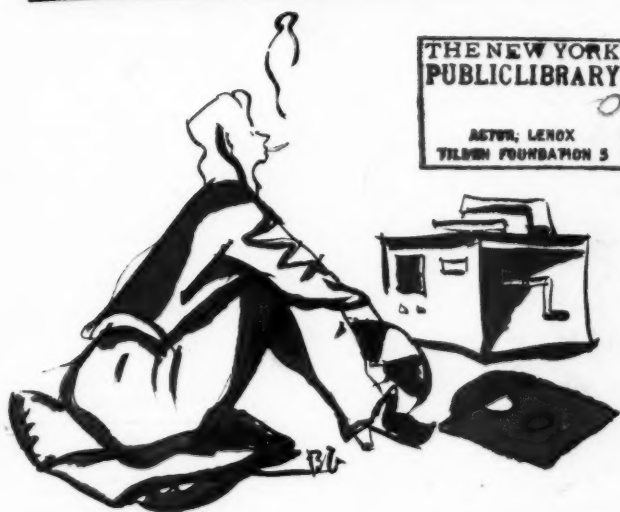


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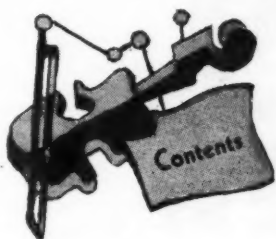
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# The American RECORD GUIDE

March 1948 ▲ Vol. XIV, No. 7

formerly THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER



Editorial Notes.....	197
Turandot and the Later Puccini —David L. Strauss with the Editor.....	198
The Singers' Toll of 1947 —Leo Riemans.....	203
Original Records or Otherwise —Philip L. Delano.....	207
Record Notes and Reviews.....	209

Published by THE AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE, GENERAL Offices, 115 Reed Ave., Pelham 65, N. Y.  
\*Peter Hugh Reed, Editor; Philip L. Miller, James Norwood, J. S. Moscovitz, Associate Editors; Harold C. Schonberg, Contributing Editor; Paul Girard and A. W. Wickes, Circulation and Advertising; Julius Spector, Art Editor.

\*Advertising Manager, Paul Girard.

\*Published monthly. *The American Record Guide* sells at twenty-five cents a copy or \$2.75 annually in the U.S.A. Yearly subscription \$3.00 in Canada and all foreign countries.

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## Editorial Notes

Despite the Petrillo ban on recording, the monthly releases pile up and frequently we feel surrounded by a veritable Alpine range. We hear rumors of new recordings that were made prior to the December 31st deadline. Many of the smaller companies compiled quite a catalogue in a very short time. The pilgrimage to other countries for additions to repertoire has begun. Our scouts in Havana, Cuba and in Mexico City inform us that some of the smaller American companies have been making recordings with the Havana Philharmonic Orchestra and with Chauvez and his Orchestra. Our English correspondent, Edward Sackville-West, wrote us recently as follows:

"The result of the Petrillo ban over here is a feverish output of recordings by all the companies. As a reviewer, it is a situation with which I find it difficult to cope. Records flow in by every post and *The New Statesman*, for which I write in this country, is consequently inundated by my prose. If it goes on like this, I shall have to ignore many of the less important issues—a thing I dislike doing, as it lessens the potential use of my column. However, there is a limit to everything."

Mr. Sackville-West's predicament is shared by us. We are tempted to lay aside the less important items, yet the wish to do justice to all prevails. There are many fine records being released which create the greatest interest in reviewers. The less important releases are frequently more difficult to evaluate since the interest is not similarly stimulated. Yet in fairness to all readers, every effort is made to cover all issues. With the larger companies it is easier to cover releases since they cooperate with review material. The smaller companies are often reluctant to offer their issues for review until some time

(Continued on page 206)



## TURANDOT AND THE LATER PUCCINI

By David L. Strauss  
with the Editor

Four friends of the Parisian Latin Quarter bilking their landlord or a Montmartre restaurant proprietor—a U. S. Naval uniform, a straw-hatted consul, and an ingenuous geisha girl in a blossom-laden Japanese setting—a Roman chief of police with a knife in his breast while his beautiful and vibrant murderess stands aghast hearing drums from the courtyard: these pictures seem to constitute the musical world's conception of the operatic theater of Giacomo Puccini. An equitable understanding of the composer's later works seems denied him. "The man for the people," Debussy sneeringly once said, "is that amazing Puccini." If this is true, the people have been neglectful of Italy's last great lyric composer. They did not seem to realize that his musical powers grew as he worked, that he was one of the most sincere and self-critical artists of the 20th century, and that in the final decade of his life he emerged a more mature, sophisticated master of his art—in short, a "later Puccini". Ten years ago the astute English

critic, Constant Lambert, pointed out that the disparagers of Puccini were unaware that he "constructed his acts with as much feeling for musical continuity and balance as Wagner ever displayed, and that far from imitating 'Debussy et cie' in any endeavor make his works sound up-to-date, he actually used Debussy harmonies some years before Debussy himself".

"Everyone with any technical knowledge," continues Mr. Lambert, "realizes that *Turandot* is a superbly scored work and that the orchestration shows the influence of the most admired intellectual masters such as Stravinsky and Schoenberg. This is not the reason why we like *Turandot*. We like it because it 'gets over', because, to put it vulgarly, it hits us below the belt." Yet, *Turandot* is neglected in the opera house. It is seventeen years since it was presented at the Metropolitan. Nine years ago, Parlophone recorded the opera in Italy, but no domestic company made any effort to release this set until recently when Decca brought



it out. The importance of this recording cannot be underestimated, since the opera is Puccini's greatest. While a recorded performance lacks the glamor and vivid coloring of the theater, it offers us a chance of musically evaluating and appreciating the later Puccini which is much more important than appraisal of his power of theatrical craftsmanship.

Failure to realize Puccini's mature stage may be attributed to the fact that the "later Puccini" was very far from being a "man of the people". Audiences which count *Rigoletto*, *Lucia* and *Madama Butterfly* as the bulk of its musical nourishment have never given affection and esteem to *La Rondine*, the *Il Trittico* and *Turandot*. The contempt of the audiences for Brahms, Sibelius and Wagner has seemingly forever prevented any interest in the triumphant Puccini of these later works. It is the belief of the present writers, and many others, that there took place in Puccini a growth as fast moving, as progressive, and as forceful as can be found in Wagner and Verdi—his chief rivals in the field of musical drama.

#### Living Characters

In creating characters Puccini had an uncanny ability. Constant Lambert compares him to Dickens without placing him on the same level. "Both were sentimental, and at times vulgar," says Lambert, "but both were able to transcend this by the extraordinary directness and humanity of their inspiration, by the curious sympathy and understanding which enabled them to create 'characters' that have existence of their own and not merely a projection of their creators' personal prejudices." Comparing Wagner to Puccini, Lambert finds the former's "heroes are idealized puppets in gilded armor" while the latter's are a "convincing gallery of cads". It is Puccini's sympathetic and deft characterization in *La Bohème*, regarded by many as his masterpiece, which makes the opera so popular. "The fact that a few of the more sentimental passages have been remorselessly 'plugged' prevents some people," states Lambert, "from realizing that *La Bohème* is one of the most perfect representations of the *comédie humaine*." The critic goes on to compare Puccini\* to the English writer Somerset Maugham, contending that the

composer balances his scales as evenly, but "whereas Maugham is cold and analytical Puccini has a quality of sympathy and tenderness which, while it might be sentimental if expressed in literary form, is ideally suited to musical expression."

To obtain a proper perspective and a fuller appreciation of the "later Puccini", the second period of his creative work, an appraisal of the last composition of his first period, *Madama Butterfly*, is necessary. Three factors combined to make this the most completely successful, the most unreservedly meritorious composition of Puccini's career. First, the choice (for the first time) of a libretto to which he was completely sympathetic. Here was a strongly centralized story with overwhelming stress on a character that captured the composer's mind. Second, the writing of *Butterfly* took place at that point in his career which found him at the peak of the development of his theatrical sense. It was this quality of histrionic effectiveness that was responsible for all his successes up to this point. Last, the growth in masterly, sensitive orchestral scoring and the art of keen articulation burst into being at this stage. From this point onward, the musical instinct was to replace the theatrical as the foundation. As the years passed, the one was to increase its mastery over the other until his greatest score *Turandot* revealed the work of the true master. In 1904, the theatrical ingenuity was at its height. *Butterfly* was still a relatively simple score, but was nonetheless an unexpected development over its predecessor, *Tosca*. (Only the music surrounding Angelotti, leading up to the heroine's first appearance, is worthy in *Tosca* of its successor.)

#### "The Girl of the Golden West"

A transitional stage between the two periods of Puccini's creative work occurs with conflicting results in the writing of *The Girl of the Golden West*. Puccini superficially still believed in theatrical craft as the cardinal source of creation. There was much to admire in this work, but its lack of sustained melody did not endear it to the public. The transitional stage found the composer unable successfully to exploit the musical power he sought to its true fulfillment. The conscious knowledge of where his path would lead was not yet clear. Hence, an experi-

See: *Radio Times*, London, June 10, 1938.

ment was chosen for the next opera.

In *La Rondine*, Puccini invaded the field of operetta. If this step did not enhance his position in the musical world, it certainly raised that form of musical entertainment to confounding eminence. *La Rondine* was the art of Lehar, Kalman, Oscar Straus, etc. carried out by a master undreamed of in the field. To be sure, there was no spoken dialogue: Puccini was ever the most superb composer when it came to turning fragmentary conversations into musical phraseology. Nevertheless, the form of the score was distinctly that of operetta. The work was a series of light, sweet songs, threaded together by the deftest of scoring. They were not arias in the accepted sense, nor were they integrated into the score: *La Rondine* could not be called an opera or a music drama.

The scoring of *La Rondine* was one of the most fulsome examples in Italian music. Before it, only *Falstaff* could be said to possess such assurance. Of the two works, however, *La Rondine* was the more effulgent. With these two compositions Verdi and Puccini left behind the slight orchestral standards called for in opera, as distinguished from music drama. Verdi began the step with *Otello*, Puccini with *Butterfly*. Puccini was to go on. The question of how much effect Wagner had on Verdi, or Richard Strauss had on Puccini, is debatable, and even more unrewarding. There is not a moment in *La Traviata* when the orchestra threatens to overcome the weakest of singers. There are, however, a few in *La Bohème*. The opposite is true of *Otello* and *Falstaff*, of *La Rondine* and *Turandot*, and this despite the *pasticherie* flavor of *La Rondine*.

#### The Triptych

The crystallization of the "later Puccini" took place with the often praised, but seldom performed *Il Trittico*—*Il Tabarro*, *Suor Angelica*, and *Gianni Schicci*. The ingenious and vigorous strokes that entered into the orchestral writing of the previous scores, now reached the vocal line. The only way that this final development of Puccini's style can be properly referred to is to call it pure music drama. On the stage and in the pit, the music portrays the story, carries it forward articulately, always by musical means. Puccini had come of age as a musician; that which he and we knew as opera could no

longer be written. The veristic drama of Mascagni and Leoncavallo was refined by a more highly skilled Puccini, and *Il Tabarro* was the result. Grim and forceful is the story and Puccini's musical setting. For the first time, he catches and conveys brooding jealousy. The three characters are living people with whose lives we may identify ourselves, and "we realize that the tragedy is inevitable," says Constant Lambert by the passage of time, not by human villainy". It is this composition, and the comedy *Gianni Schicci*, which entitles Puccini to a much higher rank as a musician than "the people" for whom he once wrote have given him. The speech in which the laborer in *Il Tabarro* expresses his resentment of the monotony of ceaseless work is an example of a veristic artistry the composer of *Bohème* and *Tosca* had previously not achieved.

#### Comedy at Its Best

Mastery of music drama is not attained until a composer has turned his hand to comedy. We think of *Die Meistersinger*, *Falstaff* and *Der Rosenkavalier*. Each was written in its composer's maturity and each ranks with its composer's highest efforts. So it was with Puccini. The chief difference was that *Gianni Schicci* had not the mellow quality of the other comedies. It was salty, adroit in its humor, and these qualities were more than present in the orchestral references to the characters. The *leit-motif*, always present in a slight manner throughout Puccini's operas, was here utilized continuously to increase the comic points. In *Bohème* and *Tosca* we found labels that accented the drama by stressing characters or objects which held the stage, i.e., Mimi, Musetta, Scarpia, Angelotti, the Latin Quarter, etc. In *Gianni Schicci* the *leit-motifs* took on the uses to which Wagner and Strauss put them. The theme of the deceased was the entire musical basis for the scene in which Schicci had been dressed for the impersonation of that unseen individual. Because of this, the dead man became a very real character as his representative theme courses through the score. The "wailing" theme had the needed essence of crocodile tears, and the Schicci motive was impressively magnified as we heard of his exploits in the tenor's narrative. The field of explanatory narrative, previously unattempted by Puccini,

was handled with ease.

The third, or rather middle, member of the *Triptych*, *Suor Angelica*, was the least important episode in the composer's later period because it lay in the one realm of music in which Puccini was always deficient. Despite his inventive powers, his wealth of melody, his sense of theatrical values, he failed to supply in his music the quality that set Bach, Beethoven, Wagner and others before him above the ranks of the greatly talented: insight into the spiritual side of his characters. Consider, for example, the most conspicuous failure in Puccini's career, the close of the first act of *La Tosca*. Against the background of a religious procession, *Scarpia* is expressing the untempered evil that dwells within him. It is the simple, fundamental, unashamed evil of a Richard III or an Iago. This very core of his nature rises to the surface as the *Te Deum* builds and culminates in the passage of a Cardinal. The librettists have supplied a setting combining tremendous power with a fine-grained irony, but Puccini failed to respond to such intricacies of the spirit. His inspiration was apathetic; he wrote a tedious processional. The same separation of book from music occurred throughout *Suor Angelica*.

#### A Libretto That Appealed

Not until he came to *Turandot* had Puccini found a libretto that excited his creative instincts, a story that he *had* to set to music. The miracle happened for the last time in the drafting of the Chinese fairy tale. When he turned his hand to it, the composer was at the apex of his powers; he had gained a mastery of European musical skill that was beyond any ever possessed by one of his race. The greatest pages he was to give to music drama occurred in this last opera; indeed, judged solely on its finest pages, he surpassed himself in this work. Yet, the whole does not approach the compact perfection of *Madama Butterfly*.

*Turandot* is undoubtedly one of the most attractive librettos any operatic composer had the good fortune to obtain. Its story is glamorous on the surface; beneath it is rich in philosophy and characterization. It has everything required of a blood-and-thunder melodrama, plus a mellow humor, a sense of the timeless Oriental understanding. It is fashioned in the combine of serious

drama and *commedia dell'arte* of the celebrated 18th-century Italian dramatist Carlo Gozzi, whose most famous play was *Turandot*, first produced in 1762. Gozzi's drama was in five acts, but for operatic exigencies the plot is compressed into three acts. The stock characters of the *commedia dell'arte* were known as masks, such figures as Harlequin, Pantalone etc. They were employed to supply humor. Gozzi used in his drama four of these stock characters; Puccini's librettists employ three. These are Ping the Grand Chancellor, Pang the General Purveyor, and Pong the Chief Court Cook. They move constantly about the edge of the main action, "supplying illuminating comments on it, and now and then furthering it a little". Their scene at the opening of the second act makes clear the unpleasant situation created by the latest challenge to Turandot of the Unknown Prince in their patter of musical conversation. The grave weakness of *Turandot*, as a Puccini libretto, is the character of the Princess Turandot. She is cold, haughty, inhuman. Inhibited by the passion for cruel Chinese revenge, she is imperious to the normal reactions of an operatic heroine. A fascinating character for a Richard Strauss, perhaps, but wrong for the Latin who lavished his musical affections upon the consumptive Mimi, the ingenuous Cio Cio San, the petulant and impulsive Tosca. Warm blood ran through the veins of all Puccini's earlier and most famous heroines (and almost all of his operas are dominated by heroines), but Turandot's veins were filled with ice.

#### A New Character

To get around this, the resourceful librettists in a stroke of genius invented the character of Liu, thereby producing a typical Puccini heroine, who speaks with confidence and possesses a dignified beauty which transcends the wistful ladies of his earlier operas. Since *La Rondine* the writing of Puccini had acquired a sophistication in keeping with the growth in musical maturity. This is most evident and most to be admired in Liu, who is superficially akin to Butterfly and Mimi, but whose musical and orchestral speech is on a new plane. Notice the impact her initial lines have upon the listener, how quickly her admirable and appealing personality are revealed in just a few

notes. Just as Wagner creates his Venus in *Tannhauser* and fixes her in the mind of the audience with the first few short phrases, so is Liu created and endeared to an audience.

The opening scene, in which Timur, Liu and the Unknown Prince meet against the background of the crowd, was one of the most effective examples of the mature Puccini. All three live and breathe, preparing the drama to come, in swift musical strokes. They are sharply etched against the crowd, whose living entity is parallel to those of Moussorgsky. This whole act reveals the mature craftsmanship of the composer. There is no hesitancy, no labor in the writing. A genius in the flower of his career was at work, sensing rather than studying the lines that were to come. The chorus, usually a subject of elision in the earlier days, had been strongly developed in this score. Not unlike a Greek chorus, somewhat in the manner of the chorus in *Lohengrin*, it comments gravely upon the action. The appeal for mercy to the executioner has qualities never before found in the composer's sugary melodies for ensemble.

#### The Music of Turandot

The wit, so noticeable in *Gianni Schicci*, is carried forward in the scenes of the three ministers, Ping, Pang, and Pong. These with Liu and the Unknown Prince delineate the best work of the opera. The deflation arrives midway in the second act with Turandot dominating the scene. There are moments of beauty and power, but they hardly take full advantage of the libretto. To be consistent with the coldness and austerity of the character, Puccini made her music unyieldingly dramatic and very high in tessitura. The most opulent voiced soprano cannot continuously produce agreeable tones. It is a grueling role which is saved by the beauty and glamorous gowning of the character. Perhaps it was the composer's intention to make her music highly difficult as technique accent to the inhuman qualities of the Chinese princess. Puccini realized he was not being too successful or kindly to this strange heroine, and concentrated all his talents into the scene in which the Princess turns from ice to fire, under the awakening of love. He compelled the librettists to rewrite this scene repeatedly, but he was never satisfied. He did not live to complete

the final duet or the last scene. He left musical sketches and the ending was written by Franco Alfano from these. Perhaps the implacable character of Turandot never satisfactorily did turn from ice to fire for Puccini. More likely, the ravages of the disintegrating malady which soon caused his death prevented his realization of his fullest powers. Another possibility, which the present writers strongly feel to be the true reason, is that Liu had become Puccini's real heroine. Certainly her music from beginning to end is redolent with the sensuous and sweet beauty one expects of Puccini, and the music of her death scene hangs heavily over the love scene that follows. That Puccini attached the utmost importance to the finale between Turandot and the Prince is borne out by his letters. Ernest Newman tells us: "This was to be not only dramatically but musically the peak-point of the work: the music, we may surmise, was to elucidate triumphantly in its own way whatever might have been left a trifle unclear in the drama". Newman is right in saying that no musician ever suffered a bitterer irony of fate in not being able to complete his greatest work as he wished it to be done. The librettist failed to supply him with the revision of words in time, and death came all too unexpectedly. Newman tells us that prior to the operation he said forebodingly: "The opera will be given incomplete, and someone will come to the front and say, 'At this point the Maestro died'." Whether as a result of the composer's words or not, the first performance at La Scala on April 25, 1926 of the opera ended without the final duet and scene. Toscanini, the conductor, turned to the audience and said quietly: "At this point the Maestro laid down his pen". Whether Puccini would have realized a greater ending than Alfano did from his sketches will always be a question. However, the Alfano ending serves its purpose.

#### The Recording of the Opera

The recorded performance of the opera is in many ways an excellent one. The conducting of Franco Ghione is unmistakably its guiding force, and the orchestra and chorus of Italy's famous radio station E.I.R.A. do admirable work. Gina Cigna, as Turandot, has the requisite histrionic ability and the voice to cope with the un-

grateful music of her part. That she is unsteady of tone and metallic sounding on occasion is understandable; only one soprano, in our memory, Eva Turner, handled the music of this role satisfactorily throughout. Jeritzta, perhaps the most beautiful of all Turandots, was also vocally uneven. Maria Nemeth in Vienna is said to have sung the part superbly, but in the German tongue for which, in our estimation, Puccini's music was never intended. Cigna, it might be observed, is in many ways a better Turandot than she was a Norma. Undeniably Magda Oliviero as Liu gives the most appealing performance, yet vocally she is not always steady. However, her characterization is so effectively contrived one finds her work satisfactory. Francesco Merli, as the Unknown Prince, reveals his long familiarity with the role, and despite some roughness in his most ardent moments his performance is stylistically better than that of Lauri-Volpi, who sang the part at the Metropolitan Opera House. Alfo Poli, Adelio Zagonara and Gino del Signore are consistently pleasurable as Ping, Pang and Pong, and Luciano Neroni

is an appropriately mellow-voiced Timur. The *Turandot* recording is an important addition to the phonograph collection of complete operas.

\* \* \*

To return to Puccini, it should be pointed out that there was certain traits that linked all his operas to each other. A personality does not disappear, it alters. There are echoes in *Turandot* of earlier works, but these are strengthened by his dramatic and musical maturity. Puccini's personality had grown and flourished under a refining process that dropped all traces of vulgarity, as well as much of the theatrical instinct. That instinct never died, but, as mentioned previously, it did yield to a great extent to the development of the musician, the artist who responded to his environment and grew, even as music did, in the first two decades of the 20th century. It should be remembered that Sibelius, Strauss, Debussy and Puccini were all writing at the same time, each being a component part of the musical growth of that period but retaining their individuality—uninfluenced by each other.



## THE SINGERS' TOLL OF 1947

By Leo Riemans

There were fifteen singers who passed away during 1947 whose voices are preserved on records. Among these, there was only one—Grace Moore—who was still in the midst of her career. She perished on January 26 in an airline catastrophe near Copenhagen, Denmark, leaving us a number of films and recordings. It is unfortunate that the latter are not particularly distinguished. She made her first recording as a musical comedy star, a black label Victor, just before the advent of electrical reproduction. Shortly after her Metropolitan debut in March 1935, she made two electricals

from *La Boheme* for Brunswick. After a pause, there came two discs from Milloecker's *Dubarry* for Victor. Following, were a number of Decca and Brunswick issues that were dubbings from the sound-tracks of her films. It was only during the war that she began to make more serious recordings of operatic arias and songs from her concert repertoire for Victor. Had the artist been more self-critical, these would have been of greater value.

Gottfried Pistor, the Wagnerian tenor, who died in Berlin on April 4th was born in 1887. He began his career as an operetta singer and



actor. Discovered by the late Juan Luria who trained him for Wagnerian roles, Pistor sang for several years in Cologne before going to Berlin. In Bayreuth, he was heard as Tristan, Parsifal and Siegmund. He created the tenor part in Strauss' *Aegyptische Helena* in Holland and also sang the part of Siegmund. In 1930, he appeared successfully with the San Francisco Opera. His memory is preserved in an excellent recording of the final act from *Parsifal* with Karl Mueck as conductor, and some Parlophone recordings from *The Ring*.

Armand Crabbé, the noted Belgian baritone, died on July 24. Considering his eminence as an artist, the lack of publicity was incomprehensible. I do not recall having seen his obituary in any of the American musical papers. His death, from heart-failure, came suddenly after his luncheon. Born in 1884, Crabbé began his career in small parts, and managed to sing all over the world before he was thirty. At Covent Garden, London, he contrived the unique stunt of singing under two names during the same season. Whenever cast for a role he deemed unworthy of his reputation, he was known on the program as M. Morin. As such he sang the Baron in *La Traviata*, Angelotti in *La Tosca*, etc. When cast as Schaunard in *La Bohème*, his own name appeared on the program. Crabbé during this period of his career also sang small parts for Hammerstein and with the Chicago Opera. In 1915, he made his Italian debut at La Scala as Rigoletto, where he was hooted after *Pari siamo* because of supposed insufficiency of voice, and then accorded an ovation after *Corrigiani vil razza* in recognition of his superb vocal technique and artistry. He created the part of Marouf at La Scala. After this, he became a familiar figure there and at Covent Garden, the Monnaie, the Colon, and the Paris opera houses, specializing in high baritone roles, also giving successful recitals. A few years back he was still successfully singing Beckmesser and Gianni Schicchi in Belgium, with the quality of his voice unchanged from his earliest records. The latter were Canadian folk songs—acoustic Victor discs. Following, came some acoustic Fonotopias in 1915. Crabbé made many early Victor electrics, mostly for South American consumption (he was particularly beloved in Buenos Aires). He also made records for French H.M.V., and near the end of his career he recorded for Decca some of his own compositions. [Crabbé's compelling artistry and vocal technique is brilliantly projected from Victor disc 9442—H.M.V. DB1034—in the *Largo* from *The Barber of Seville* and the *Drinking Song* from *Hamlet*. His spirited rendition of the *Largo*, despite the French language, remains one of the most convincing performances of this aria on records, and is a fine souvenir of a great artist.—Ed.]

Charles Friant, who died on April 22, was unknown in America except on records, and even these—I feel certain—are only known to specialized collectors. Friant was a true French

tenor—an artist America should have known. One wonders why Mary Garden never brought him to Chicago in her palmy days as impresario of the opera. He was born in 1890. In his early career, like Muratore, he was an actor, and reached opera via operetta. He was a particularly skilled actor, in fact one of the best on the French lyric stage during his time. His was a sympathetic light tenor voice, ideally suited to the music of Massenet, as can be heard from his electric Odeon discs. Some of these latter were issued by Decca in America before the war. Friant also made acoustic H.M.V. and Pathé records. Those who know Massenet's *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame* as sung by a soprano (for whom the composer never intended the part) should hear Friant's recording of the final scene (Decca discs 20585/87 or Odeon 188798/200). It is among the most moving I know.

Leon Ponzio, who died in November at Mar-seilles, was a baritone, similar to Crabbé. This type of voice is very common in France and is known as the "baritone martin". It is a voice that has characteristics of the tenor. Others of this type were Jean Périer (who created the part of Pelléas), André Bauge, and Charles Panzera. Like the true mezzo-soprano (Galli-Marié in France, for example), their repertoire is limited. Ponzio specialized in Figaro and some classical operettas. It should be remembered that both the roles of Pelléas and Mar-ouf were composed for this type of voice and *not* for tenor—although tenors have successfully sung them. Ponzio recorded both acoustically and electrically for Pathé.

It would seem that France lost by far the greatest number of artists this past year. Is it that their news agencies pay greater attention than the Germans and Italians when it concerns oldtimers? Next on the list is Emile Marcelin, the excellent lyric tenor of the Opéra Comique in the 1920's. He made many acoustic H.M.V. discs and later a few electric. With the tenors Campagnola and Vezzani, he had the distinction of having purple labels instead of black ones. He was born in Roubaix in the north of France, and died in his town. In his last years, he was active as a professor at the Conservatoire there.

France lost two of her greatest prima donnas of bygone days in the deaths of Marthe Chenal and Marguerite Carré. The former died on January 29. In her day, she was one of the most beautiful women on the Parisian stage. In fact, she was so beautiful that I distrusted her ability as a singer until I heard her exceedingly rare sapphire Pathé records and received the same pleasurable experience as when I first heard Lina Cavalieri. It was much the same type of voice but better produced. Her repertoire was enormous and versatile. She sang Donna Anna as well as Mlle. Lange in *La Fille de Madame Angot*, Bruneild in *Sigurd* as well as *La Belle Helene*. Thais and Tosca were among her favorite roles. Like many famous

Parisian stars, she rarely sang outside of France. She appeared at Covent Garden around 1909, and I believe she sang with Hammerstein just before the end of his enterprise.

Marguerite Carré died in November. Bauer's Historical Catalogue states she was born in 1869, but I shudder to think what she might have done had she seen that date. She told me she was born in 1881. Whatever the date, she was born Marguerite Giraud and made her debut as such. When still very young, she attracted the attention of Albert Carré, director of the Opéra Comique, whom she married. She was a star of that institution for over thirty years, creating practically every role she possibly could. One finds her name in almost every other Opéra Comique cast of the period. She was the first French Butterfly. She created La Lépreuse and sang Famina in the famous 1910 revival of *La Flûte Enchantée*. Oddly enough there are surprisingly few records of her voice. All that we know are some elusive old G & T's of 1904 (which no one to my knowledge has ever found or heard) and one or two equally rare Pathé discs. Considering that she was still singing in 1928, this is most peculiar.

Celestina Boninsegna, who died on February 14 in Milan, is, on the other hand known to every collector of records. In fact, her records made her more famous than did her actual appearances. She sang for several seasons in Boston following her two appearances at the Metropolitan in the season of 1906-07 as Aida and Santuzza. Born in Reggia on February 26, 1877, she made her operatic debut at an early age. Though popular in Italy she seldom sang at the La Scala. Her first recordings were made for Italian H.M.V. (some of these were issued by Victor, and one this past year has been re-issued in the Heritage series). Later came her matchless American Columbia series. Meanwhile she made just one record for Edison and a number of Pathés. Not all collectors know of her discs made in Italy for Columbia, H.M.V. and Pathé during the 1914-18 war, which I consider her best. Her voice is smoother and better equalized. She still had her telling chest tones but used them more wisely, avoiding the yodel effects of her Columbia *Ernani* record. Those who have the IRCC re-pressings of her *Loreley* and *Guarany* duets know how well she sounded during that period. In 1918, she made a Pathé disc as Azucena in the *Racconto* from *Il Trovatore*, in the contralto key, during the same session that she sang her recordings from *Loreley* and *Tosca*. [One of Boninsegna's most brilliant and imposing performances is in the duet, *Vivra contende il giubilo* from *Il Trovatore*—Victor disc 88524, which she sings with the gifted baritone, Cigada.—Ed.]

The great Viennese singer and actress, Anna Bahr-Mildenburg, who died at Vienna on February 2, was almost omitted in this article, as no records of hers were known to exist.

However, a short time ago, a G & T of 1904 was found in which the singer renders an abbreviated version of the Ocean aria from *Oberon*. It seems to be the only souvenir we have of one of the greatest operatic figures of this century. It is hoped that the owner of this rare record will consent to have it re-recorded and issued by IRCC. The singer's name may not mean much to Americans, as she never crossed the Atlantic, but her importance to Germany and Austria was much the same as that of Wilhelmine Schroeder-Devrient a century ago. She revolutionized the whole conception of Wagnerian singing, and her Bayreuth Kundry was the most outstanding heard there. Equally famous was her interpretation of Klytemnestra in *Elektra* and her portrayal of Donna Anna in Mahler's famous *Don Juan* revival. Her Isolde, Brunnhilde, Medea, Fidelio, etc. were justly famed. She was the wife of the playwright, Hermann Bahr.

By a coincidence, Bahr-Mildenburg died in the same year as her great rival, Ellen Gulbranson, who sang Brunnhilde in Bayreuth in the years when the former did Kundry and Isolde. This famous Norwegian Wagnerian soprano was the Flagstad of the turn of the century. A pupil of Mathilde Marchesi, she originally made her debut in *Aida*, as a contralto in the role of Amneris. It was Marchesi's daughter, Blanche, who discovered that Gulbranson had a true dramatic soprano voice. Blanche snatched Gulbranson as a pupil from her mother (which may have been one of the reasons for their subsequent break) and trained her for soprano parts. Like Flagstad, she had a peculiar career. Both became famous after forty, and with a limited repertoire. Gulbranson's, however, was more restricted than Flagstad's. She concentrated on Brunnhilde. Only occasionally did she sing other Wagnerian roles and then only at Bayreuth, or for the Amsterdam Wagner Society and as a guest on special occasions in Germany. She was never engaged regularly as a member of any operatic company since her marriage in 1892. Her only records were made for Pathé (sapphire cut) in Sweden in 1914. IRCC re-issued one of these some time ago and may re-issue another shortly. Meanwhile, I hear that a wax Edison cylinder of hers has been found in (of all places) Seattle, but its value for re-recording is doubtful.

Four American artists died during the year of 1947. On August 31, Lillian Blauvelt, the soprano—who recorded both for Victor and Columbia in the early day, passed away. Her records need no introduction to discerning collectors. This singer began her career as a violinist at the age of eight. She was best known as a concert soprano, though she appeared successfully in opera in such parts as Juliet, Zerlina and Mignon. Her operatic debut was made in Brussels in 1893 as Mireille. Ten years later she sang Marguerite at Covent Garden.



Corine Rider-Kelsey, who likewise preferred concerts to opera, also died in 1947. She recorded extensively for Columbia around 1916, but sang mostly hackneyed ballads which did her little justice. The most valued record, a fine memento of her artistry, is Columbia's disc 5071-M containing two Handel arias—*O Sleep, Why Dost Thou Leave Me* and *Angels Ever Bright and Fair*.

The basso, Herman Waterous, of whom little is known, made one or two records for Pathé.

Ellen Beach Yaw, the last of the Americans, deserves more attention than she usually gets. She died on September 9 in California. It is unfortunate that her Co-Art record of the *Mad Scene* from *Hamlet* was ever issued. It was recorded in the soprano's seventy-fourth year, in her own English translation, and has done much to damage her reputation as a serious artist. Far better is her unpublished electric H.M.V. disc of 1937 from *Mireille*, despite some painful sounding top notes. Her old Victors disclose a perfect coloratura voice in the best Marchesi tradition. Sometimes it sounds more like Melba's than any of the latter's records, giving some idea of how Nellie must have sounded in the 1890s. Yaw's unpublished *Mad Scene* from *Lucia* (issued by HRS) was excellent, and if pressed on good modern material her *Lakme* and *Noces de Jeanette* arias should be highly successful. Her most amazing recording was made for Edison—her own composition *The Skylark*. This trite little tune is a vehicle for one of the strangest singing stunts on records. Her notes in altissimo have been bettered by Erna Sack, but nowhere else can one hear trills like Yaw's, starting in the usual (but perfect) seconds, going into thirds and ending in fourths. She recorded the same song for Rex in England (this latter disc is not a dubbing of her Edison, but a completely different version with different vocal variants). Also a hill-and-dale recording, the Rex is better reproduced. On the reverse face of this she sang a Polonaise from *Mignon* which easily surpasses any other version I have heard including Tetrzzini's and Hempel's. This record *must* be made re-available somehow!

### Editorial Notes

(Continued from page 197)

after they are placed on the market. Frequently, their output is limited and prefer-

ence is given to sales. There are smaller companies who have evinced a disinclination to have some releases reviewed, which leaves the impression that they do not highly regard their merchandise. Yet, in several cases where we have investigated such material, there seems to be no just reason for this restraint. Most musicians of our acquaintance are anxious to have their recorded products reviewed by the press and they resent the attitude of some of the smaller manufacturers. Indeed, some have gone out of their way to personally dispatch their recordings to us. Another reason why some companies are disinclined to send out releases for review is because of poor record surfaces. Apparently, there is a buyer for any set no matter how well or how poorly recorded. Some of the smaller companies have held up announced releases because of bad surfaces and have declined to send out review copies until desirable merchandise was available. This is a laudatory procedure, and one wishes this precedent were followed by all manufacturers.

Despite the Petrillo edict, these are exciting times in the record field. Undoubtedly, more and more fine recordings made outside of the country will invade the domestic lists. This should bring us a lot of new music and serve to introduce many fine artists whose names have hitherto been unfamiliar on domestic labels. As desirable as this is, however, we can only hope that an early settlement of the Union situation will be made, for our first duty lies with our own artists.

Meantime the work of the conscientious reviewer has not been made any easier, and the pressure on him from all sides is far greater than most readers realize. We are grateful for the evidence that there is no disruption in the industry, and we hope this will prevail.

## INDICES and BACK COPIES

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## ORIGINAL RECORDS OR OTHERWISE

By Philip H. Delano

Many record collectors are confused these days because they do not know in what direction their hobby is going. There are many factors contributing to this: the seemingly uncooperative record companies, the high and uneven prices of old discs, the re-issues of more or less scarce material, and the development of new recording and new reproduction equipment, particularly the tape recorder. However, this latter device or any other modern reproducing system, in my estimation, will never completely obliterate records or diminish their value. Indeed, there is every reason to believe the opposite.

Confusion among record collectors stems in part from the fact that records have a definitely dual nature. Being more or less rare and limited in quantity, they constitute natural objectives for the acquisitive search of the collector, their unlimited variety affording continual satisfaction and stimulation. On the other hand, each acquired record contains a few minutes of captured sound which time and again may be played for personal enjoyment. The voice or art of a performer from the past can be heard with a realism which pushes the curtain of time aside. The artistry of a bygone era is revived for the listeners of a later generation and it is this seeming miracle which fascinates the collector, fires his imagination, and prompts his ever-increasing interest.

The hobby of record collecting is so young that most participants have not analyzed their purpose or defined their objectives. Few distinguish between the acquisition of the record and the value of the music and the interpretation. Most record collectors, that I have met, consider themselves music lovers and not simply collectors. Yet most are seeking certain records and aiming at fulfillment of certain categories regardless of musical enjoyment. One wants all recordings by Ponselle or Muzio—good or bad. Another wants all recordings of Bach sonatas, yet another wants all recordings by Paderewski and Rachmaninoff, or songs of the Gay Nineties. One desiring all records of

an artist, good or bad is not affirming his status as a pure or simple music lover but rather as a true collector. The distinction should be made. It is only an idea, not a fact, that all records of any great artist are of comparable excellence. If the record alone is desired, the tape recorder affords an excellent opportunity of securing whatever music or performance one may desire in a more permanent and un-wearable form, regardless of rarity, and furthermore editable to any individual arrangement. Whenever I have pointed this out to collectors, most of them answer that they prefer the records themselves.

There is a parallel between books and records, and this preference for the original records accentuates it. However, book collecting is a much older hobby that has had time for stabilization. In records, as with books, we have collectors who desire only first editions and others who are interested only in the content. Just as there is little relationship between the rarity and value of a book and its contents, the pleasure afforded a listener has little relation to the rarity and value of a record. In books, those that are rare and valuable are the first editions. Reprints and later editions are just as enjoyable and may be better reproduced than the original, but only the first edition is likely to rate any collector premium. Anyone can read and enjoy a fifty-cent copy of *Alice In Wonderland*, the original edition of which sells for \$50,000. By analogy we can expect original copies of Caruso's "Una furtiva lagrima" to rise continually in value, while reprints, re-recordings, and re-pressings may be available to anyone at a nominal figure. Yet, the quality of the original in comparison with its reprints becomes of prime importance with a record in order that a commensurate enjoyment be attained to the reprint of a book. In the case of the book, the reprint may be unchanged in text or illustrations, but the quality of the reproduction in the record may be seriously impaired.

Unfortunately for music lovers or collectors, many of the finest records are very rare and difficult to obtain. For this reason they have acquired a price value in addition to their artistic value. Some of these have been re-issued either by the original companies or by societies that have made a business of such re-issues. It is evident on consideration that reprints have a different status from the originals because the number that may be pressed is not limited. True enough, the number made under ABC label may be limited and thus acquire a certain scarcity value of its own owing to the fact that many will want only this series. However, successive re-issues on a DEF or XYZ label can be released until the market for a certain noted artist's sterling performance is surfeited.

The value of re-issues which have little artistic value, serving merely as souvenirs, sometimes rather unfortunate ones, remains controversial. It is true that early recording methods did not always do the great artists justice. However, I do not know anyone who

plays his Edouard de Reszke's in preference to his Pinza's, or his Bellincioni's in preference to his Muzio's. The subject of musical and artistic merits is quite distinct from record desirability and almost any collector will trade quite a number of appreciably artistic recordings for an old Bellincioni or a de Reszke or a Victor Maurel. Only those who do not understand this will regard modern releases in the same way as originals.

### The Heritage Series

We can analyze the relative failure of the recent Victor Heritage series. The basic idea was conceived as a service to collectors, to make available fine performances on the old records that are difficult or impossible to secure in original condition. That this could have been done most easily by issuing a list of numbers to be purchased on special order just as had been previously done is beside the point. The modern set-up of a recording factory, beset with Union difficulties, exactments and material shortages, undoubtedly prevented this procedure. However, the Deluxe edition, designed and issued at such a price that each side in many cases cost more than the originals themselves in recent years, ran into buyer resistance which has already forced reduction of the initial cost. In other words, it was not realized that the re-issues would have the status of any new record and sale would be confined to those who desired the particular performance in any available form. The new records did not automatically assume the desirability of the scarce originals. It is not the author's intention to deride the Heritage series but to emphasize that it is a mistake to try to serve both musical and pure collector values

without distinction. By their fundamental nature, the Heritage records are of value principally to the music lovers and music collectors. The series is too new to have an established status to be evaluated by the real record collectors. Regrettably, the opportunity to exploit real musical values was not considered and outstanding performances of past singers were overlooked in favor of trite and inferior material. Perhaps if those responsible for the selections re-issued had chosen more wisely, particularly in regard to artistic interpretations, interest might have been greater. Even yet it is not too late to establish an artistic catalog that can prove to every listener there really was a Golden Age of Opera.

There is another and more dangerous side to the making of re-issues. When the record is pressed from a re-recording instead of from the original master, the possibility of distortion of the artist's performance is too well known to dwell upon. Often through dubbing or calculated engineering "improvements", the resultant record may be difficult to reconcile with the original performance. We all know of the improvement in reproduction over the old acoustic phonograph which results from playing an old record on a modern, well-designed and properly adjusted, electrical reproducer. I wonder, however, if it is possible to produce a re-recording that is actually an improvement over the original master. Can any tone be introduced or any artistry added that was not originally present? Generally, so-called improvement consists in elimination of high-frequency overtones to reduce scratch and in modulation of the low frequencies to accommodate inferior reproducers.

Re-issues have been made in the past without notice, and it is evident that there is nothing to prevent any company from re-releasing their products as often as they wish. Even when the original masters have been lost or destroyed, they can re-issue by means of re-recordings almost indistinguishable from the originals. Since there will always be the probability of a re-issue of desirable recordings, collectors must analyze and define the characteristics that have price value or resign themselves to the possibility that any record may suddenly lose most of its value. In the case of books or stamps, the occurrence of re-issues affects the value of the original little if at all. Each re-issue finds its own value according to its rarity and desirability. Should it not be the same with records? Collectors may want any or all of the issues according to their individual preference. It is doubtful if re-issues will greatly affect the value of the original records in the long run. However, they are most valuable when they make the greatest performances of the past available to those who appreciate supreme artistry. Modern performances surpassing the old will always prevail and the old may then be left behind. Each succeeding generation will contribute its share of valuable recordings, and these may in time become rarities attracting the interest of the student, the collector, and the historian.

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## RECORD NOTES AND

# REVIEWS

▲Correction: In his review of the Bach *Magnificat* last month, James Norwood erred in saying that Miss Thebom and Mr. Ernice Lawrence sang the duet, *Et misericordia*. Six contraltos and six tenors, from the RCA Victor Chorale, performed this duet. The illusion of two voices fooled more than one of us.

### Orchestra

BEETHOVEN: *Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op. 125*; The Boston Symphony Orchestra, with soloists and chorus, conducted by Serge Koussevitzky. Victor set DM-1190, eight discs, price \$9.00. (Manuel set \$10.00.

▲This set was not received in time for review this month.

BEETHOVEN: *Wellington's Victory* or *The Battle Symphony* (4 sides), and *King Stephan Overture* (2 sides); The Janssen Symphony of Los Angeles, conducted by Werner Janssen. Artist Records set S-14 (automatic), price \$5.00.

▲"Among the immortal nine," says Schaufler in his book on Beethoven, "this so-called symphony cuts much the same figure that the *chef d'oeuvre* of a sidewalk artist would cut in the main hall of the National Gallery." Most of us know the story of Maelzel and his "Panharmonicon", an apparatus combining, according to Thayer, "the common instruments then employed in military bands". Maelzel was an ingenious person. Beethoven needed money for a trip to London, and Maelzel suggested writing a program piece celebrating Wellington's recent victory over the Napoleonic forces at Vittoria in Spain. Not only did Maelzel influence Beethoven to write this music, but he

"even laid before the composer the whole design of it and wrote all the drum-marches and trumpet-flourishes of the French and English armies". This strange and conglomerate composition includes three military tunes—*Rule Britannia*, *Malbrook* (known to Americans as *For He's a Jolly Good Fellow*), and *God Save the King*. How the composer could lend his hand to such a meretricious affair seems hard to understand today. That it provided him with his "first overwhelming triumph" is ironical. Today, the *Battle Symphony* is a musical curio with little but historical interest to recommend it.

It was the enterprising recording pioneer, Frieder Weissmann, who first revived interest in this work two decades ago. I suppose a natural curiosity in people would create some interest in a work of this kind (they want to hear music, not read about it), and if the popularity of Weissmann's earlier recording can be used as a gauge, then this one of Janssen's should enjoy considerable distribution. It is splendidly performed and, of course, much better recorded. However, what may sell the work for some is the inclusion of the *King Stephan Overture*. Because of harsh criticisms by some writers it is practically never played. Janssen proves himself a brilliant spokesman in its behalf, though his skill does not conceal its perfunctory workmanship. —P.H.R.

**BRAHMS:** *Symphony No. 2 in D, Op. 73:* Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra of New York, conducted by Artur Rodzinski. Columbia set MM-725, five discs, price \$7.10.

▲ Here is one symphony that has not lacked recordings; and among the best versions available is Columbia's own Beecham set, which presumably is now superseded. There also was a decent Barbirolli version, one by Weingartner and, more recently, examples by Ormandy and Monteux. The Monteux is on four discs, the Ormandy six; all others, five.

I don't admit to owning all of the above, but did compare the new Rodzinski with the Beecham, Monteux and Barbirolli. As a recording, the present set is superb—much superior to the Beecham or Barbirolli. Only Monteux can approach it in fullness, clarity and definition. It is quite interesting to compare the interpretations. Barbirolli's may

lack the subtlety and orchestral command that the others bring, but has a surprisingly strong, vital quality. I always have had a soft spot for it. For shaping and nuance the Monteux set is unsurpassable. It may not be Brahms as the Germans conduct him; there is a transparency of texture one ordinarily associates with less weighty composers. Monteux has logic on his side however, and his interpretation is urbane, polished and suave. The Beecham set would come closest, perhaps, to the ideal blend of philosophy and lyricism that is inherent in the music. It is altogether a magnificent achievement.

Rodzinski gives us no great surprises here. His conducting is at all times able, his rhythms clear, his melodic outlines firmly shaped. Objective in his approach, he is most successful in the last movement, where he fully communicates the excitement of the final climax. In the slow movement he has a tendency to drag a bit, and more feeling for the color would have helped the mood. One would be hard pressed to point at specific instances of imbalance or, indeed, anything that is not present in the score. Despite the faithful translation of Brahms' notes, however, a more personal touch would not have been amiss in this, the most personal of all the Brahms symphonies.

Concerning Monteux's four discs against the others' five: it is not that Monteux goes so much faster as that the others are more generously grooved. He takes the allegretto movement on one side; in the Rodzinski it is distributed over two. Nevertheless, if anything, Rodzinski is generally a little faster in his tempos. All things considered, anybody who buys the new Columbia set will hear some musicianly playing, but it would be the wisest thing first to compare it with the Monteux and Beecham. —H.C.S.

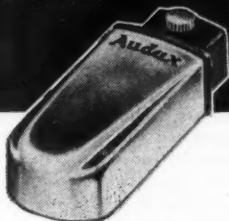
**ENESCO:** *Roumanian Rhapsody in A, Op. 11, No. 1;* Leopold Stokowski and his Symphony Orchestra. Victor disc 12-0069, price \$1.00.

▲ Stokowski's Symphony Orchestra is one, I am given to understand, especially assembled for his newest Victor recordings. One suspects it is much the same body as the RCA Victor Orchestra. The recording here is exceptionally fine, having a clarity of line and instrumental definitude which augurs well for future releases by the conductor. This



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*Rhapsody* is less well known than *Opus 11, No. 2 in D major*. It is a more straightforward piece in which the Roumanian tunes "appear succesively and are treated in variation form rather than developed". The melodies are all appealing. The first half of the composition is sentimental while the second half is as gay as a festive-minded gypsy girl and as colorful as her garments.

This is the sort of music for which Stokowski has a flair. His performance in the latter part displays his masterful control of an orchestra. I cannot remember when I have heard the glissando midway more excitingly played.

GLINKA: *Kamarinskaya—Fantasie*; The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Fritz Reiner. Columbia disc 12715-D, price \$1.25.

▲ This work was once the best known of all Glinka's compositions, but in recent times the *Ruslan* overture has captured some of its popularity. Based on two Russian folk tunes, *Kamarinskaya*, according to Gerald Abraham, "became the model for all later essays in the symphonic handling of Russian folk-melodies". Originally, the composer called the composition *Wedding Song and Dance Song*, but later he gave it the name of the song from which he derived his second theme. The composer denied any programmatic intentions, but the original suggested the mood of the music. There is a genial and lusty quality to this score which makes for exhilarating listening. Reiner gives a zestful account of it and the recording is realistic.

—P.G.

KHACHATURIAN: *Gayne Ballet Suite—Sabre Dance*; The Chicago Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Artur Rodzinski, and *Masquerade—Waltz*; The Boston "Pops" Orchestra, conducted by Arthur Fiedler. Victor disc 12-0209, price \$1.00.

KHACHATURIAN: *Gayne Ballet Suite—Sabre Dance and Lullaby*; Oscar Levant (piano) and the Columbia Concert Orchestra, conducted by Lou Bring. Columbia 10-inch disc 17521-D, price \$1.00.

▲ There is excitement in the whirling animation of the *Sabre Dance* which has helped popularize it. This is an orchestral *tour de force* which would vanquish almost any listener's lethargy. I recommend it for the

bored guest. The Chicago Symphony under Rodzinski's alert direction turns in a brilliant performance which is intensified by realistic recording. The reverse side, equally well played, comes from the *Masquerade* album reviewed last month.

After listening to Rodzinski's *Sabre Dance*, Mr. Levant's pianistic efforts sound tame and clumsy. There is a lack of coordination in this performance, which may or may not be attributable to the arrangement.

KHACHATURIAN: *Masquerade—Suite* (5 sides); and IPPOLITOV-IVANOV: *Caucasian Sketches—In the Village* (1 side); The Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra of New York, conducted by Leopold Stokowski. Columbia set MM-729, price \$4.60.

▲ There is a lushness to Stokowski's treatment of this music, and far too much *rubato*. The Fiedler version, reviewed last month, has a brilliance and incisiveness which, in my estimation, serves the music to the best advantage. Moreover, Fiedler takes only two records. Nor do I think the movement from the *Caucasian Sketches* offers any appreciable improvement over Stokowski's earlier Philadelphia Orchestra version.

MASSENET: *Scenes Alsaciennes—Suite*; The Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Dimitri Mitropoulos. Columbia set MM-723, three discs, price \$4.60.

▲ Massenet, who served in the Franco-Prussian war, was unhappy at the thought of Alsace-Lorraine going to the Germans. He had fond recollections of the country and this suite grew out of them. Essentially a man of the theater, he could conjure scenes of atmosphere and action, and in the present work suggest nostalgia in its descriptive character. The composer was never a great orchestrator and this suite aims at no presence in this field. It is simply and effectively scored. Massenet's ability to dwell on the characteristics and emotions of his operatic personages served him well in this music. His four movements—*Sunday Morning, At the Tavern, Under the Linden Trees, and Sunday Evening*—find him lingering on details of remembered scenes and people. The program he supplied (given in the notes with the set) reveals his picturesque inten-

tions. The first and third movements are sentimental. The second is a rather innocuous drinking scene. The finale which employs an Alsatian dance tune is surprisingly rowdyish in its gaiety.

It is not often that one hears a work of this kind so splendidly played. Mitropoulos' performance is one of musical perceptiveness, a model which other aspiring interpreters would do well to hear. Moreover, the Minneapolis Orchestra is heard at its best, and the recording does it justice.

**MOZART:** *Eine kleine Nachtmusik, K. 525;* The Pro Musica Orchestra, conducted by Otto Klemperer. Vox set 169, two plastic discs, price \$5.00.

▲There is not the acoustic liveness to this recording that prevails today. However, the orchestra is a small one and the reproduction has an appropriate intimacy for a chamber ensemble. In December, we had Beecham's version of this music—a performance of refinement and grace. Klemperer is more straightforward than the British conductor and less concerned with nuance. He plays the finale in the traditional *alla breve* time (two beats to the bar), which is given in Koechel. Beecham adopts a four-four beat in this movement, which makes for slower pacing and allows for greater subtlety. I have seen two German editions of this work in which the finale is marked four-four time, and I suspect Beecham uses one of these.

**SCHUBERT:** *Overture in the Italian Style in C major;* The Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent. Columbia disc 72464-D, price \$1.25.

▲Schubert a la Rossini! The story goes that upon hearing a Rossini overture he told some friends he could write similar music very easily. The two Italian overtures in *C* and *D major* were the outcome of his boast. The present work is prefaced with a long *adagio*, in which I hear more of Schubert than Rossini, but the gaiety that follows in the overture proper is pure Italian operatic music. What is lacking is Rossini's wit but there is enough cheerfulness to hold the interest. Sargent's performance is lively but not quite as smooth as it might have been. Perhaps the fact that it was recorded during the war (in early 1944) has something to do

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with an occasional lack of balance. The recording is good.

**SCHUMANN:** *Symphony No. 3 in E flat, Op. 97 (Rhenish)*; The Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Dimitri Mitropoulos. Victor set DM-1184, four discs, price \$5.00.

▲ This is the best reproduction of the Minneapolis Symphony I have heard to date on Victor records. Its balance and naturalistic orchestral qualities are gratifying. I have never been completely satisfied with previous performances of this symphony. The Copola, which dates back a decade and a half, was defeated by the unresonant recording. The Walter, made in 1941, was far more appreciable, but the reproduction lacked acoustic liveness and clarity of detail. The Mitropoulos is the best recording. Moreover, his reading is more discerning. Purity of line and clean phrasing reveal a penetrative imagination. Where Walter is properly forceful and exultant in the opening movement, Mitropoulos supplies a melodious vigor and a smoother flow. In the second movement he affirms the joviality of mood with less awkwardness than we usually hear, and his deft handling of detail is a delight. I like the delicacy of mood in the slow movement, though it could summon more dynamic subtlety. Throughout I find Mitropoulos' discretion in the use of ritards praiseworthy. The fourth and fifth movements are clearly etched with none of the protrusive accents in which Walter indulges. In this set, the Minneapolis Orchestra emerges very favorable in comparison with the Philharmonic. Indeed, its horn section is heard better to advantage: the tone being less opaque.

Whether those who own the Walter set will wish to replace it is doubtful. Walter reveals an understanding of the romanticism of the mood and many of his admirers may be reluctant to transfer their affections. Those who have shunned the purchase of this work would do well to hear this performance.

**STRAUSS, Josef:** *Music of the Spheres, Op. 235*; The Boston "Pops" Orchestra, conducted by Arthur Fiedler. Victor disc 12-0068, price \$1.00.

▲ In reviewing the Leinsdorf-Cleveland Or-

chestra version of this waltz, in July 1947, I remarked that he made very little contrast between its varying moods. Perhaps some might accuse Fiedler of the same treatment, yet his more incisive beat shows a steadier hand at the orchestral helm. There is an elegaic undercurrent to this generally gay waltz which neither conductor fully comprehends. However, of the two renditions, I would plump for this one.

**TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Symphony No. 1 in G minor, Op. 13 (9 sides), and Eugen Onegin—Waltz (1 side)*; The Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Fabien Sevitzky. Victor set DM-1189, price \$6.00. (Manuel set \$7.00).

▲ In November 1947, we discussed this symphony in our review of the Rachmilovich-Santa Monica Symphony performance (Disc set 801). That recording was inclusive on eight sides and did not require a filler-in. Quite some time ago, an Indianapolis reader informed us that Mr. Sevitzky had made this work, and some aspects of the recording suggest a less desirable placement of microphones than more recent ones reveal. Yet the recording is more satisfactory than the Disc set, having an acoustic resonance which the other badly needed. Mr. Sevitzky's performance is energetic and forthright but lacking in some of the rhythmic resiliency in Rachmilovich's. Despite these observations I would recommend this set above the other since its price is the same. Few will deny that its enlivening reproductive qualities is not a vital factor.

**TOCH:** *The Chinese Flute, Op. 29*; The Pacific Symphonette with Alice Mock (soprano), conducted by Manuel Compinsky. Alco Set AC-203, three plastic discs, price \$4.50.

▲ The composer tells us this is a chamber symphony, with soprano solo, depicting "a series of mood pictures inspired by ancient Chinese poems. . . it is not conceived as a group of songs but as an instrumental composition to which the human voice is added as a link to interpret the moods". The texts are from the writings of Li Tai Pe, Sao Hen and Confucius. Since the employment of the voice is definitely instrumental in style, vowel sounds might have served the

singer better than words, for the singer's lines do not often permit clear enunciation of the text.

The scoring of this work is for two flutes, two clarinets, strings, celeste and percussion. From this small group, the composer obtains many striking and colorful effects. The music is fundamentally impressionistic with an ingenious independence of instrumental writing. Its poetic imagery reveals sensitivity and imagination. Divided into six movements, the first, third and fifth are instrumental interludes setting the moods for the vocal parts which follow. Toch wrote this composition in 1923 when quite a number of composers were absorbed with the setting of oriental poetry. The vogue for this sort of thing has died out, and very little of this music heard in the 1920s is performed today. The present work, however, deserves revival.

There is a tenuous quality to this music and, as in all impressionistic works, enjoyment depends much on the listener's susceptibility and imagination. The opening movements are melancholic and plaintive—moods of recollection. The fourth depicts the agitation of a troubled conscience. The fifth is an interlude, using the celesta, setting the stage for the finale which is contemplative in character save for the short intensified opening section of the postlude.

The performance and recording are excellently contrived. It is evident that the conductor carefully prepared the performance and that he possesses a full and sympathetic understanding of the composer's intentions. Miss Mock's singing is tonally appealing although lacking in dramatic implication, especially in Sao Hen's verse. A mistaken theory has been advanced that this work will not reproduce well on anything but an extended range set. This is not true. —P.H.R.

**MUSIC OF COLE PORTER;** Andre Kostelanetz and his Orchestra. Columbia set MM-721, three discs, price \$4.60.

▲Smooth flowing performances of six Cole Porter favorites. It's Kostelanetz in the groove again revealing his skill at interpreting popular music. I miss the wit and sophistication that others impart to these tunes, but I doubt that many would be displeased with this set. Its contents are: *In the Still of the Night; All Through the Night; I Con-*

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centrate on You; I Love You; I've Got You Under My Skin; and Blow, Gabriel, Blow. Swell recording. —P.G.

### Delius Society Set

DELIUS: *Concerto for Piano* (5 sides); *Marche Caprice* (1 side); *A Song of the High Hills* (6 sides); Sir Thomas Beecham conducting the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, with Betty Beecham (at the piano in the *Concerto*) and the Luton Choir in *A Song of the High Hills*. Victor set DM-1185, price \$7.00 (Manuel set \$8.00).

▲Delius' music will never appeal to the populace—it is too rarefied, too introspective and too sweetly sad. A romantic at heart he sought to enhance his poetic thoughts with new and richer harmonic treatment in which there are infinite subtleties of color, line and texture. His is an emotional serenity. Even when he aims for grandeur and dramatic power, there is a sensitivity of purpose beneath. Fenby in his book tells us the composer believed music "a thing of instinct rather than of learning, of the heart rather than the head". His *Piano Concerto* is an early work, originally in three movements but later revised into a one-movement composition with fast, slow, fast sections. It is not a concerto in the classical sense but a phantasy for piano and orchestra in which the melodic piano-part meanders. The middle section (*Largo*) is the most impressive and I am inclined to agree with one writer (Heseltine) that the work should have ended with it. The *Marche Caprice* is a still earlier composition. It has a slight oriental tinge with some characteristics of Grieg, but its wistful ending is true Delius.

*A Song of the High Hills* is one of the composer's most ambitious works. Delius said of it, "I have tried to express the joy and exhilaration one feels in the mountains, and also the loneliness and melancholy of the high solitudes, and the grandeur of the wide, far distance. The human voices represent Man in Nature—an episode that becomes fainter and then disappears altogether." The chorus is used as instruments, no words are employed. Philip Heseltine said of this composition: "The music is full of a sense

of spacious solitudes and far horizons. The elation of the ascent is succeeded by a mood of ecstatic contemplation. . . ." I have long known and admired this music. Having lived for a number of years in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, I have experienced that sense of ethereal grandeur, that vast and rugged distances awaken. Delius wrote this work, I am sure, recollecting some similar country, "perhaps the mountains of Norway".

Sir Thomas clarifies and shapes each phrase with discerning musical perceptiveness. The concerto is played with admirable tonal warmth and expression, but the dominating spirit is that of the conductor. The recording reveals an advance in realism from the studios of H.M.V. in England. It is the best and most revealing reproduction Sir Thomas has had in his many Delius Society sets. —P.H.R.

### Concerto

BRAHMS: *Concerto No. 1 in D minor, Op. 15*; Clifford Curzon (piano) with the National Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Enrique Jordá. Decca set EDA-47, six discs, price \$13.00.

▲Curzon's recent recital in New York was praised by critics as a memorable one of the season. The pianist is a musician of sensitivity and intelligence, as proved by his performance of this formidable and exacting score. As an introduction of Curzon to American record buyers, this was hardly the ideal selection. A highly difficult score, this concerto was regarded in Brahms's day as forbidding, austere and unpianistic. Brahms first wrote it as a two-piano sonata, then as a symphony, and finally scored it as a concerto. Unquestionably, he revised his material too much and in so doing created a composition that shaped itself as neither symphony nor concerto. It is actually a symphony with piano accompaniment. Our late friend and contributor, Henry S. Gerstle, thought very highly of this music, which he discussed at some length in his review of Serkin's performance (see: April 1947 issue). He believed the work was one of Brahms's finest, "music that was profound and deeply moving at all time". "There is despair, passion and revolt in the opening movement,

magnificently unrestrained, rugged and militant," he said. "The wonderful slow movement, devout, gentle and serene, is in complete contrast. Here, Brahms suffuses the music with a romantic sweetness that goes straight to the heart of the listener. The final movement, slightly Hungarian-gypsy in spirit, is vigorous and buoyant—lively without at any time being superficial."

Summing up the several recordings of this work, Gerstle claimed the earlier version of Bachaus, Boult and the B.B.C. Symphony as the finest performance. Serkin, while technically proficient and musically above reproach did not measure up to "Bachaus at the height of his powers (when this recording was made)". Schabel's interpretation, he found stylistically mannered and not as well played. I agree with his observations. Curzon gives a musicianly account of the score. In many ways, he is more imaginative than Serkin and there is often a greater elasticity to his playing. In the big opening movement, he does not strive for the virility of Serkin, and logically so for the music does not at all times demand it.

The fundamental difference in performances is an acoustic one. This is the most impressive recording, but its very "liveness" and its wide range, I suspect, defeat some of the best interests of the score. For example, the orchestra frequently submerges the pianist and his left hand does not stand out as prominently in the big passages as does Serkin's. Here, however, the piano is not as prominently featured as in the Columbia recording, and the sound of the orchestra is more spacious. Jorda tends to be heavy-handed. Where Reiner was vital and resilient, he is ponderous and rhythmically inelastic. His treatment of the Adagio is careful but dull, and only redeemed by the poetic benignity of the pianist. The conductor lets things get out of hand midway through the eleventh side, although he captures nicely the music's elation. If one's equipment can properly reproduce this recording, its tonal opulence has much to offer. —P.H.R.

**RAVEL:** *Concerto for the Left Hand*; Robert Casadesus (piano) and the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy. Columbia set MX-288, two discs, price \$3.35.

▲ Up to now, the only previous version in

American catalogues has been the Cortot-Münch-Paris Conservatory Orchestra example released in January, 1940. The history of the music is well known. It was composed in 1931 for the one-armed pianist Paul Wittgenstein, who, incidentally, did not play the premiere, having gotten into an altercation with the composer about aspects of the solo instrument's scoring. One can sympathize with the pianist—the music is phenomenally difficult.

Despite certain inadequacies, there is much to be said for the Cortot recording. Stylistically it is impeccable; there is knowledge and feeling to that pianist's art. Comparison of the two recordings, however, shows that as a technician Casadesus is superior. Cortot was getting along in age, and did not at that time have the flexibility and accuracy that Casadesus brings. The new recording, too, is brighter. This is one of the few times that Casadesus has had a decent break in recording. For the first time on records one can really appreciate the color of his tone and the variation of his dynamics. As customary with Philadelphia Orchestra records, the orchestral parts are brilliantly reproduced, making the over-emphasized bass and more limited frequency response of the older recording sound drab in comparison.

The music deserves acquaintance. Some may call it precious, but there is delicacy to the scoring and delight in the melodic scheme. A few commentators have pointed out jazz influences, which should not be taken too seriously. The French have always admired *Le Jazz Hot* without knowing exactly just what it was all about. While there may be a

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few hints at jazz harmonizations, there also are some decidedly Oriental themes—what are *they* doing in the score?—and several other disparate elements. Most of all, though, the music is French, with refined workmanship, masterly orchestration, a pronounced (if limited) imagination, and much originality. —H.C.S.

SCHUMANN: *Concerto in A minor, Op. 54*. Artur Rubinstein (piano) with the RCA Victor Orchestra, conducted by William Steinberg. Victor set DM-1176, four discs, price \$5.00. (Manuel set \$6.00).

▲In the old Cortot performance of this work, which dates from around 1933, there was a mellowness of mood and a true feeling for *innerlichkeit*, which is not similarly evidenced in the Arrau-Krueger version. There is much to admire in Arrau's rendition, especially in the last movement where he, more than anyone else, imparts the true Schumann *Schwung*. For my own part, the performance by Myra Hess (Victor set 473—January 1939) was preferable to Arrau's. "She entered into the spirit of the music with just the right feeling for the composer's intentions," as our late associate, Henry S. Gerstle, once said, "particularly in the first two movements."

I expected to find Rubinstein the ideal interpreter of this music since his past performances have revealed a closer affinity to the romantic school than most players of today. Despite his phenomenal equipment and eloquent expression, his interpretation does not convey to me a similar absorption of purpose as Myra Hess. "The perfect touch lies in the imagination," as an English writer recently said, without it the performance can lack full conviction. Steinberg handles the orchestral part competently and the recording—made in Hollywood—is excellent. Yet, in my estimation, the inner compulsion which makes music-making inspired is missing. Had

Miss Hess had a more sympathetic conductor, her performance would be irreplaceable, but as matters stand none of the modern versions are interpreted to perfection. —P.H.R.

## Chamber Music

BRAHMS: *Quartet in B flat major, Op. 67*; The Guilet Quartet. Vox set 208, four discs, price \$5.25.

▲Since this is the most popular of Brahms's quartets, it is surprising no modern recording of it was previously planned. It is also surprising that the older versions made by Lener (c. 1931) and by the Budapest (c. 1933) are omitted in the catalogues. As performances, neither was completely satisfactory since the reproduction offered little dynamic variance. The best of the two was the Budapest but even this admirable ensemble was not ideally represented.

The Guilet ensemble is much better recorded, revealing the excellent coordination and many nuances of its playing. This is a difficult work. The rhythmic scheme of the opening movement is complicated and the slow movement requires the smoothest phrasing. I think the spirit of revelry in the first movement could have been exploited more. I like the handling of the melodic lines in the Andante. There is feeling without excessive sentiment which Lener preferred. The scherzo is the violist's show. There are some rough spots in the playing here, especially in the muted passages. The finale, with its naive theme, has much delicacy which the players deftly handle.

I feel certain admirers of this music will be very much pleased with this recording. There is just the right spaciousness in sound and the surfaces of the discs are good. Vox deserves a vote of thanks. —P.H.R.

STRAVINSKY: *Pastorale for Violin and Wind Quartet*; Joseph Szigeti with Mitchell Miller (oboe), Robert McGinnis (clarinet), Bert Gassman (English Horn), and Sol Schoenbach (bassoon), and *Russian Maiden's Song*; Joseph Szigeti with Igor Stravinsky at the piano. Columbia disc 72495-D, price \$1.00.

▲I presume the *Pastorale* is the one written

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in 1908 and later scored for voice, flute (instead of oboe) and the other instruments. It is a most attractive piece with an appealing melody that suits the violin. The accompanying woodwinds are effectively employed with some humorous touches. The *Russian Maiden's Song* with its tenderness gives us a rare side of the composer. It recalls the *Berceuse* in *The First Bird*.

Five skilled musicians unite, under the direction of the composer, to give a most expressive performance of the *Pastorale*, but the dominating personality is that of the violinist. Szigeti invests the *Russian Maiden's Song* with admirable musical sensitivity and Stravinsky proves himself an impressive pianist. Excellent recording.

TOCH: *Spitzweg Serenade*; Louis Kaufman (1st violin), Grisca Monasevitch (2nd violin), and Ray Menhennick (viola). Vox set 117, two 10-inch discs, price \$2.75.

▲ This wholly delightful work was written in 1917 during the composer's service in the Austrian army. During a period behind the lines, he came across a group of paintings by Karl Spitzweg (1808-1885). Among these was a small town nocturnal scene which inspired this composition. Spitzweg proved an anodyne for the distress of war and prompted the composer to write music recalling a period of tranquillity and quiet elation. The choice of instrumentation was a fitting one, the viola with its ruminating pensive quality gives a foundation of strength and at the same time allows for a spiritual freedom that the deeper-toned cello might not have supplied. The sensitivity and refinement of Toch's musical writing is immediately apparent. The trio reveals a fine poetic feeling for melody and polyphony. This is not music which one can easily describe. It creates a mood expressing emotion in tranquillity and an inner exultation. Not the least of its attractiveness is the spontaneity of the writing—a weaving pattern of sound which at no time suggests an interruption in its creative urge.

The album has a copy of a Spitzweg picture suggesting an old world atmosphere—a group of serenading musicians. Undoubtedly the motivation of this music sprung from the picture yet Toch has not written music harkening back to the 18th century even though its roots spring from classicism. In-

deed, the spirit of the music is timeless. The performance, prepared under the supervision of the composer, is excellent, and the recording completely satisfying. —P.H.R.

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## Keyboard

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ORGAN MUSIC: *Fantasy in F minor, K. 608* (Mozart); *Prelude and Fugue in G minor, Op. 7, No. 3* (Dupre); *Sonata No. 1 in F minor, Op. 65* (Mendelssohn); *Gigue a la Fugue* (Bach); Virgil Fox (played on the organ in the John Hays Hammond Museum, Gloucester, Mass.). Victor set DM-1177, five discs, price \$6.00. (Manuel set, price \$7.00).

▲ This is one of the finest organ sets which Victor has issued in recent years. The Hammond organ proves to be an instrument well suited to recording, and the acoustic qualities of the room in which it is played seem ideal for massive effects as well as finer details. Mr. Fox, organist of the Riverside Church in New York, needs no introduction. His musicianship and taste have been revealed in earlier records, but not always in conjunction with so desirable an instrument.

As an organ recital, this offers rich and varied fare. The Mozart work, originally written for a Little Clock-Work Organ, dating from the composer's last year, is a composition which is melodically fresh and ingeniously polyphonic. The outer movements possess a grandeur befitting of Bach and the lovely Andante owns a rare poetic serenity. The work of the contemporary French organist, Marcel Dupre, has an appealing delicacy and elegance. The Mendelssohn will be familiar to many since it is often played in organ recitals. It is one of the most durable in organ literature, with its harmonic richness and efficient workmanship. The Bach is one of those wholly delightful little works which almost defies

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analysis. Mr. Fox plays it as well as I have ever heard it, with poise and vitality. His performances throughout are sympathetic, resourceful, and never dull, and the recording is excellent.

RAVEL: *Pavanne pour une Infante défunte*; and DEBUSSY: *Reverie*; E. Robert Schmitz (piano). Victor disc 12-0066, price \$1.00.

▲Despite the beauty of tone in the Ravel, I find the pianist's sensibilities more intellectual than emotional, and I do not condone the two cuts he makes in the music. It will be recalled that Koussevitzky recently recorded the composer's orchestral version taking two sides. Some years ago, Myra Hess recorded this work on two sides of a ten-inch disc. Hers is a preferred performance. The Debussy is an early work which he professed to have written in a hurry and regarded as of no great importance. Harmonically it is quite orthodox. Perhaps because it does not impose any great problems for a pianist, this work has become quite popular with amateur players. There are some niceties of phrasing and pedalling in Schmitz's performance. It is the felicitous and realistic reproduction which recommends this disc, every nuance and color effect in pedalling by the pianist is faithfully portrayed. —P.H.R.

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### Instrumental

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HANDEL (arr. Hubay): *Larghetto*; and CASSADO: *Requiebros*; Edmund Kurtz (cello) with Artur Balsam at the piano. Victor disc 11-9953, price \$1.00.

▲The balance between the instruments is exceptionally fine, especially in the *Requiebros* where the piano part is given its full due. Kurtz plays the Handel with poise and expression. In the other piece, by Casals' famous pupil Gasparo Cassado, he fails to disguise the fact that the going is not always easy, but both he and Balsam capture the spirit of the music.

NEVIN: *The Rosary*; and KREISLER: *Stars In My Eyes*; Fritz Kreisler (violin) with RCA Victor Orchestra, conducted by

Donald Voorhees. Victor 10-inch disc 10-1395, price 75c.

▲Kreisler still has a way with a tune. While I doubt that anyone owning his old record of *The Rosary* would trade it in for this new one, I am sure many will welcome this recording which has the orchestra. I like *Stars In my Eyes* best. —P.G.

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### Voice

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BALFE: *Killarney*; and TRADITIONAL: *Down by the Glenside*; Christopher Lynch (tenor) with RCA Victor Orchestra, conducted by Maximilian Pilzer. Victor 10-inch disc 10-1396, price 75c.

▲To paraphrase Gertrude Stein: A tenor is a tenor is a tenor. When they have high tones they must exploit them. It seems to me that Mr. Lynch has selected too high a key for both of these songs. Not that he sings with effort but high range defeats his usual fine diction.

BRAHMS: *Zigeunerlieder, Op. 103*; Lotte Lehmann (soprano) with Paul Ulanovsky at the piano. Victor set DM-1188, two 10-inch discs, price \$2.50. (Manuel set \$3.50.)

▲Were I not so familiar with Gerhardt's recording of these songs, I might be less critical of Mme. Lehmann's efforts. Though Gerhardt made her version late in her career, she brings more ingenuousness to her interpretations. Mme. Lehmann's singing lacks the freedom of impulse, a quality she formerly possessed. In recent years the singer has concentrated upon subtleties of text which has not always been as tellingly employed as in her rendition of the last two songs where she is heard at her best. The recording is perhaps too unkindly realistic in accenting the soprano's breathing.

GLUCK: *Orfeo ed Euridice—Che farò senza Euridice*; and THOMAS: *Mignon—Me voici dans son Boudoir* (Gavotte); Nan Merriman (mezzo-soprano) with RCA Victor Orchestra, conducted by Frieder Weissmann. Victor disc 12-0067, price \$1.00.

▲I think the singer was ill-advised to include the recitative. She adopts a tempo in

the aria which is too fast. I admire her fine musicianship,—her phrasing, smooth rhythmic flow and clear enunciation, but Orfeo's anguish is not fully conveyed at this tempo. The *Mignon* aria is competently sung, but Miss Merriman prods memories of Bori and Farrar. Mr. Weissmann provides competent accompaniments, and the recording is full bodied. —J.N.

GLUCK: *Orpheus and Eurydice* (A Concise Version Sung in Italian); Kathleen Ferrier (contralto), Zoe Vlachopoulos (soprano), Anne Ayars (soprano) with Glyn-debourne Festival Chorus and Southern Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Fritz Stiedry. Decca set EDA-39, seven discs, price \$15.00.

▲One of the enduring sets of recorded opera is the Columbia recording of *Orpheus* (sung in French), issued domestically in October 1936. Comparing the old version with the new, one finds the former holds its own. Few will deny that the spaciousness in the present recording adds much to the performance. Like the older set, this one is not a complete version of the opera, nor is it judiciously cut. There are definite features in favor of both. There is more of the first act in the older set and more of the third act in the new one—including desirable choral passages with a complete rendition of Orpheus' aria *Che faro* (unfortunately this is taken at too rapid a tempo). The present version makes use of both the Italian and French editions of the opera. Gluck added to the original score for later production. Space does not permit us to go into the history of the opera's presentations.

I prefer the score sung in the original Italian, in which the arias flow best. The French and German languages lack the fluid grace, especially the German, and anyone having heard the opera in this tongue will I am sure agree. Miss Ferrier sings smoothly and appealingly (with the exception of one or two recitatives) but lacks the more vibrant and sensuous dramatic qualities of Alice Raveau. Only in the *Che puro ciel* does she give a more impressive performance than Raveau. The latter, taking Orpheus' famous aria, *Che faro senza Euridice*, at a slower and more affecting tempo sang only half of it on the allotted single face. Miss Ferrier, taking it at a more rapid pace, gets recitative and aria on a single side but with sadly dis-

affecting results. The contralto made an earlier version of this air (in English) which was sung at a better pace. Miss Ayars, as Eurydice, sings with appeal. Miss Vlachopoulos, as Love, is no more than adequate. Her voice is rather fragile and edgy. The chorus is competent but I failed to understand more than a dozen words of the text. Mr. Stiedry's direction is prosaic in comparison with Mr. Tomasi's. The latter in the opening act brings dramatic intensity where Stiedry tends to be stolid, and throughout Tomasi's rhythmic treatment is more flexible.

The arrangement of the score with the omissions are open to controversy. Alec Robertson, reviewing the performance in *The Gramophone*, commented at some length on this, and also on the omission of details of the excerpts on the record labels. An informative booklet, written by the Gluck authority—Martin Cooper, issued with the set in England, was not furnished us by Decca. It will be required. However, a libretto in English and Italian will assist the listener in following the score and ascertaining the cuts and the arrangement. I wish I could be more enthusiastic about this ambitious venture, but I feel it has not been too well planned. Its inclusion of more music from the second and third acts, however, is a recommendation that admirers of Gluck will not fail to note. —P.H.R.

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**GOUNOD:** *Faust—Il était un Roi de Thule* and *Air de Bijoux*; Eleanro Steber (soprano) with RCA Victor Orchestra, conducted by Jean Paul Morel. Victor disc 11-9838, price \$1.00.

▲The recording gives the complete scene from Marguerite's entrance to the end of the *Jewel Song*. Miss Steber is both an ingratiating and convincing Marguerite. Her singing of the *King of Thule* conveys the right preoccupation with the story. Once she completes the song her actions are mirrored in her performance. She brings some charming touches to the scene where she discovers the jewel casket without overdoing the surprise element. The *Jewel Song* lies well for her voice and she sings it with ease and assurance. Like others she jumps too quickly for the high tone at the end and strives for too much crescendo but the certainty of her vocal placement is undisturbed. Not the least appreciable part of this record is the splendid orchestral accompaniment of Mr. Morel. He brings nuances of lines where others simply beat time.

**MENOTTI:** *The Medium* (7 discs) and *The Telephone* (3 discs); Evelyn Keller, Marie Powers, Beverly Dame, Catherine Mastice, Frank Rogier and Marilyn Cotlow, with Orchestra conducted by Emanuel Balaban. Columbia set M or MM-726 (2 volumes), price \$14.70.

▲The first American operas to be recorded prove as stimulating in reproduction as they did in the theater. They offer as unique and as convincing an experience as anything of their kind on records. Since the sets arrived too late, detailed discussion will have to be postponed until next month. Meantime, we recommend our readers to hear them.

—P.H.R.

**PUCCINI:** *Gianni Schicchi—O mio babbino caro*, and *La Bohème—Musetta's Waltz*; Bidu Sayao (soprano) with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, conducted by

Pietro Cimara. Columbia 10-inch disc 17515-D, price \$1.00.

▲There is a simplicity and charm to the *O mio babbino caro*, but little conviction in the urgency of Lauretta's appeal. Alabinese gave the aria more meaning. The ardor and vivacity in Musetta's song is weak, yet the singing is poised and lovely and much better than that of most Musettas heard in the opera house. The recording is good. —J.N.

**ROMBERG:** *The Student Prince—Excerpts*; Risé Stevens (mezzo-soprano) and Nelson Eddy (baritone) with Chorus and Orchestra, conducted by Robert Armbruster. Columbia set MM-724, three 10-inch discs, price \$3.75.

▲A mezzo and a baritone take over for soprano and tenor. The album is made for the fans of both singers. The selections are: *Golden Days*; *Drinking Song*; *Deep In my Heart, Dear*; *Serenade*; *Just We Two*; and *Come Boys*. —P.G.

**SCHUBERT:** *Staenchen* and *Liebesbotschaft*; Dorothy Maynor (soprano) with George Schick at the piano. Victor 10-inch disc 10-1372, price 75c.

▲How refreshing and welcome a recording of the *Staenchen* is with piano accompaniment instead of the over-emphasis of the orchestra. In both songs, the singer is heard at her best. There is a tonal sweetness and vocal ease. I feel Miss Maynor has given time and consideration to her performances of both lieder, for she sings them with conviction and understanding. The piano accompaniments of Mr. Schick are equally admirable. Good recording. —J.N.

**SONGS OF ROBERT SCHUMANN**; Blanche Thebom (mezzo-soprano) with William Hughes at the piano. Victor set MO-1187, four 10-inch discs, price \$4.00.

▲Admirers of fine lieder singing will do well to acquire this set. Miss Thebom reveals herself as one of the foremost interpreters among the younger artists of today. Mr. Miller will discuss this release in our next issue.

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# In The Popular Vein

By Enzo Archetti

*The Jingle Bell Polka*, and *The Whistler*; The Modernaires, featuring the Hal Dickinson Orchestra under the direction of Lou Brigg. Columbia 37980.

*Too Fat Polka*, and *Your Red Wagon*; The Starlighters, with Orchestra. Capitol 480.

●A group of foot-tickling polkas, all quite different from each other. *Too Fat* is the hit of the moment. It is said that a recording of this—Arthur Godfrey's, no doubt—sold a million copies in the shortest time on record. This waxing by the fine vocal group known on the radio as the Starlighters lacks the dry humor and style of Arthur Godfrey but vocally, it is much better. Rhythmically, too, it will hold its own. It should be a good rival to the Godfrey disc. *The Jingle Bell* is a piece with a good idea that gets lost. The Polka Dots are a harmonica band who do a surprisingly good job with their polkas.

The flipovers of the other two discs are fair and less than fair. *Your Red Wagon* has a humor which escapes me at the moment but the Starlighters treatment is pleasant. *The Whistler* falls flat and not even the modernaire's style can save it.

*You Can't Tell the Depth of the Well*, and *I'll Never Make the Same Mistake Again*; Victor 20-2477. *With A Hey and A Hi and A Ho Ho!* and *My Flame Went Out Last Night*; Victor 20-2515. Louis Prima and His Orchestra. Vocals by Louis Prima and Chorus.

●Typical Louis Prima with too much of his gravel-throated vocalizing, as usual. Someone must have told him he sounds like Louis Armstrong and now he's playing that angle for all its worth. *With A Hey and A Hi* is the best number in the lot because of its humor and rhythm. *You Can't Tell* comes off second best for the same reasons. The other two I can forget. Recording is good.

*Elube Chango*, and *Cubalou*; Musicraft 535. *Canto Siboney* (Lecuona) and *Negro*; Musicraft 526. Miguelito Valdes and His Orchestra.

●Cuban music with much of its primitiveness still intact. It's exciting this way. The Valdes group play with an abandon and fine rhythm. Musicraft engineers did a good job on this.

*Theme To the West*, and *Curiosity*; Capitol 15005.

*Minor Riff*, and *Down In Chihuahua*; Capitol B449. Stan Kenton and His Orchestra. Vocals by The Pastels and June Christy.

●Further evidence that Stan Kenton deserves to inherit the Ellington crown. *Theme* is an

ambitious work, reminiscent of the *Warsaw Concerto*. It's smoothly played, with Stan himself at the piano. *Curiosity* and *Down* are more in the current popular vein but with decisive rhythms. These two contain vocals; the others are all-instrumental. *Minor Riff* is good jazz with some swell solos by Stan on piano, Eddie Safranski on bass, Chico Alvarez on trumpet, and Vido Musso on tenor sax. *Down* has a section near the end when the rhythm goes haywire and the result is really funny. Don't pass up either one.

*My Cousin Louella*, and *My Promise To You*; Victor 20-2582.

*Song of New Orleans*, and *Gonna Get A Girl*; Victor 20-2560. Larry Green and His Orchestra. Vocals by the Trio and Don Grady.

●Smooth dance numbers except for *My Promise* which is a travesty on Chopin's *Nocturne in D-flat*. This last is played at a deathly slow pace. The best is probably *Song of New Orleans* which has an engaging melody. Recording good.

*Patches*, and *Johnson Rag*; Capitol 474. *Near You*, and *Oh, Peter*; Capitol B452. Alvino Rey and His Orchestra. Vocals by The Blue Boys and Jimmy Joyce.

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● Neat but not quite up to Alvin's previous releases—excepting, *Near You*, which is a smoothie with a good vocal by Joyce. *Johnson Rag* has pep but no real distinction. Recordings and surfaces are slick as silk.

**Collectors' Items;** Capitol Album AD-62 4-10" discs.

● Capitol has collected eight previously unreleased recordings by as many artists or groups between the years 1944 to 1947, and labeled them collectors' items even before they have passed the acid test of hypercritical jazz fans. In my opinion, their confidence is not misplaced. All of these discs will surely become collectors' items, if not because of their musical worth, then because of the performances.

Stan Kenton and his orchestra, with Anita O'Day as vocalist, do *Travelin' Man* with a kick. Red Nichols and His Pennies (Red Nichols, cornet; Herbie Haymer, tenor sax; Heinie Beau, clarinet; Paul Leu, piano; Thurman Teague, bass; Rollie Culver, drums) put bounce into *You're My Everything*. The Hollywood Hucksters (Benny Goodman, clarinet; Red Norvo, xylophone; Benny Carter, alto sax; Charles Shavers, trumpet; Jimmy Rowles, piano; Red Callender, bass; Irving Ashby, guitar; Dave Cavanaugh, tenor sax; Joe Koch, baritone sax; Lee Young, drums) give a nice smooth, slow version of *I Apologize* with some outstanding solo work by Benny, Red and Carter. *Bug In A Rug* is played by Sonny Greer and The Duke's Men with Ellingtonian feeling. There is some beautiful clarinet and alto playing by Barney Bigard and Otto Hardwick. The rest of the line-up consists of Taft Jordan, trumpet; Duke Brooks, piano; Red Callender, bass; Freddie Guy, guitar, with, of course, Sonny Greer on drums. That "Duke Brooks, piano" sounds like a phony name but there isn't enough piano playing to identify him with Duke Ellington though all the evidence seems to point that way. *Baby* by Peggy Lee and Dave Barbour's Orchestra has rhythm but curiously, more because of the accompaniment than because of the singer, though she is the headliner. The personnel consists of Billy May, trumpet; Hap Lawson, Heinie Beau, Maurie Styne, reeds; Milt Raskin, piano; Dave Barbour, guitar; Artie Shapiro, bass; Nick Fatool, drums. *Taint Like That* by Rex Stewart's Big Eight also has that Ellington touch which is hardly surprising since the line-up is comprised almost entirely of active and ex-Ellington men: Rex Stewart, trumpet; Lawrence Brown, trombone; Harry Carney, baritone sax; Al Sears, tenor sax; "Eddie Wood", piano; Ulysses Livingston, guitar; Junior Raglin, bass; Keg Purnell, drums. Once again, the obvious pseudonym for the pianist is suspicious although the style is not Ellington's. Eddie Miller's Orchestra plays a smooth *Just One More Chance* with Eddie's sax well to the front all the way through. The others in the group are Dave Cavanaugh, Bob Poland, Clint Neagley, reeds; Pete Daily, cornet; Tommy Linehan, organ and piano; Nappy Lamare, guitar; Harry Barbasin, bass; Farnk Carlson, drums.

It's a distinct novelty to hear the organ prominently in a jazz line-up doing so well. One of the real gems of the lot is *I Can't Get Started* by Benny Carter's Orchestra (Benny Carter, Porter Kilbert, alto saxes; Gene Porter, Bumps Myers, tenor saxes; Willard Brown, baritone sax; Karl George, John Carroll, Edwin Davies, Milton Fletcher, trumpets; Alton Moore, J. J. Johnson, John Houghton, Bart Varsalona, trombones; W. J. Edwards, guitar; Gerald Wiggins, piano; Charlie Drayton, bass; Max Roach, drums). It is almost like hearing Bunny Berigan again but with the trumpet part expressed in the golden tones of Benny Carter's sax.

On the whole, this album is a worthy addition to Capitol's Americana catalog. This is true American jazz.

**Singing the Blues;** Victor Album P-192, 4-10" discs.

● Planned by Leonard Feather, eminent jazz composer and critic, who also supervised the recordings, these discs illustrate the real blues as sung by artists whose whole background and experience is steeped in the traditional twelve bar medium. The purpose is to set the record straight again for those who may have accepted styles and songs of modern singers and composers whose work is blue in name only. The result is a splendid collection of interpretations which will surely make jazz history.

It's a pleasure to hear true blues, simply sung, without affectation, without displays of virtuosity. Some of these same artists have sometimes drifted far a-sea to please the general public demand. Here they have returned home again. Armstrong and His Hot Six—here consisting of Barney Bigard, clarinet; Vic Dickinson, trombone; Leonard Feather, piano; Allan Ruess, guitar; Red Callender, bass; and Zutty Singleton, drums—play and sing *Blues In the South and Blues For Yesterday*. Louis sounds like the Louis of years ago. The others fit perfectly into a well coordinated picture, especially Barney Bigard, whose mellow clarinet sounds like another voice. Mildred Bailey sings smoothly and subtly. Segar Ellis' *Any more*, here called *I Don't Wanna Miss Mississippi*, and King Cole's *That Ain't Right*. These are comparatively modern blues but they have their roots in the past. The Ellis Larkins Trio—consisting of Larkins, piano, Eugene Fields, guitar, and Beverly A. Peer, bass—tastefully accompanies her. Handy's *St. Louis Blues* and Teagarden's own *Blues After Hours* are the contributions of Jack Teagarden's Big Eight (Teagarden, vocal and trombone; Cliff Strickland, tenor sax; Peanuts Hucko, clarinet; Max Kaminsky, trumpet; Gene Schroeder, piano; Chuck Wayne, guitar; Jack Lesberg, bass; Dave Tough, drums). *St. Louis* loses some of its effect because of its fast pace but *Blues After Hours* is just right. Here some of the best work is done by Jack and Max Kaminsky. Ethel Waters version of Handy's *Careless Love* is moving. Her exposition of Benny Carter's *Blues In My Heart* is curiously unsatisfying. I suspect the accompaniment by the Herman



Chittison Trio (Chittison, piano; Everett Barksdale, guitar; and Carl Powell, bass) for Ethel Waters is an old hand at the blues.

Our discovery that Duke Ellington's *Jam-A-Ditty* on Musicraft 511 was from a different master than the *Jam-A-Ditty* on Musicraft 466 in the album, *Duke Ellington At Carnegie Hall*, started me investigating other Ellington recordings recently issued by Musicraft. Shortly after the album was released, Musicraft sent to this column for review the same four discs without the album. Record and matrix numbers agreed but closer examination revealed some interesting things. Part 1 of both issues of *Overture To A Jam Session* are from the same master but Part 2 of the "loose" release is from "take" number two and the one in the album is from "take" number one. Part 1 of *Beautiful Indians* in the album is from "take" number four and the "loose" release is from an unnumbered "take", presumably number one. Part 2 in the album is from "take" number three and the "loose" release is again from an unnumbered "take". *Flippant Flurry*, *Golden Feather*, and *Jam-A-Ditty* in both releases are identical but the two *Sultry Sunset* recordings are from different, but unnumbered "takes".

In effect, all of these releases from different "takes" are from different masters. This is of interest to Ellington collectors who must have everything he waxed to make their collections complete. To those who are interested in Ellington's music, the difference between the "takes" will be too insignificant to matter.

*On the Record*; Victor Album P-199, 4-10" discs. *He's His Own Grandpa and Never Trust A Woman*; Victor 20-2715. Phil Harris and His Orchestra, with The Sportsmen.

● Victor has collected some Harris' favorites in an album, including the inevitable *That's What I Like About the South*, for his many admirers. All 8 sides are in the familiar glib patter style he has developed to perfection. Besides *South*, there's *The Dark Town Poker Club*; *44 Sycamore*; *Ain't Nobody Here But Us Chickens*; *Woodman, Spare That Tree*; *Pappy's Little Jug*; and *Minnie the Mermaid*. Some of these have been issued before but whether these are reissues or pressings from other masters, I cannot say—and neither does Victor. The only disc with which I could make a direct comparison was the previously issued *That's What I Like About the South* (Victor 20-2089). The two discs sound identical but both label and matrix numbers are different.

The single is in the same vein. There's a switch of pronouns in *He's His Own Grandpa* but the song is the same as *I'm My Own Grandpa*. *Never Trust A Woman* makes good advice, as Phil puts it, but it won't be popular with the women.

*Dry Bones*; Victor Album P-193, 4-10" discs. *Ain't Gonna Worry 'Bout A Soul and Little Small Town Girl*; Victor 20-2588. Delta Rhythm Boys.

● These boys have style and a subtle rhythm but that isn't news. What is news is that Victor has assembled an interesting collection of their features and favorites which makes a well varied program and a good souvenir.

Each disc has an example of something strongly rhythmic and something slow and sentimental. I find the rhythmic numbers best. Least interesting is Handy's *St. Louis Blues* which loses its true blue feeling in this breakneck version.

The single disc follows the same pattern though the numbers are less interesting musically. The recording is excellent throughout.

*Love Is Fun* and *At the Candlelight Café*; The Three Suns, with vocals by Artie Dunn and The Sun Maids. Victor 20-2599.

● Still safely within the *Peg o' My Heart* formula—but pleasant. *Candlelight* is pseudo tea-room gypsy music.

*Charmaine* and *Lullaby of Broadway*; The Philharmonica Trio, with Rhythm Accompaniment. Capitol 483.

● A harmonica group, with rhythm. Both oldies given novel treatment. *Charmaine* is best if only because of its three rhythm changes but both are expertly done.

*Love Is So Terrific* and *Solitude* (Ellington); Ernie Filice and His Quartet (Personnel: Ernie Filice, accordion; Dick Anderson, clarinet; Larry Breen, bass; Dick Fisher, guitar; Bob Sandfelder, drums) Capitol 486.

● A much better disc than their previous one. The Ellington is an obvious attempt to duplicate the Master's mood and tonal combinations. Nobody has yet succeeded in duplicating Ellington's reeds playing in unison but Filice's combination gives a first-class imitation. The result is enjoyable. So is the reverse.

*Bogg's Boogie* and *Red Hair and Green Eyes*; Victor 20-2295. *Tailor Made Baby* and *All Aboard for Oklahoma*; Victor 20-2552. *Spadella* and *You Never Miss the Water*; Columbia 37585.

● Cooley has developed a fascinating mixture of Western and swing styles. At least two of these numbers could hold their own at any jam session and the others aren't anything to dismiss lightly. The boogie and *Spadella* have rhythm and ideas. The others, more "Western," are peppier and better played than the usual run of Westerns. The electric guitar has a prominent part throughout.

*You Don't Have To Know the Language* and *My Gal Is Mine Once More*; Johnny Mercer and The Pied Pipers, with Paul Weston and His Orchestra. Capitol 15025.

*You Can't Make Money Dreamin'* and *My Baby Likes To Be-Bop*; Johnny Mercer and The King Cole Trio. Capitol 15026.

● Mercer dominates both records but the styles are of the associate artists respectively. That with the King Cole bunch has better rhythm—

and the numbers are more interesting musically. Incidentally, one of the pieces is only about be-bop. First rate recording.

*Rhode Island Is Famous For You and Mary Lou*; The Pied Pipers and Paul Weston and His Orchestra. Capitol 489.

● An oldie and a new one. Typical Pied Pipers style. *Mary Lou* is very well done.

*What'll I Do and My Cousin Louella*; Frank Sinatra with (a) Orchestra under the direction of Axel Stordahl and (b) Trio accompaniment. Columbia 38045.

● Sinatra's fans will gobble up this one anyway, regardless of what we say, but it really isn't up to his best. The Berlin number is sung lackadaisically and *My Cousin* not much better.

*East Coast Blues and I Understand*; Harry James and His Orchestra. Vocal by Buddy Di Vito. Columbia 38059.

● The *Blues* is a real surprise from Harry James. I didn't think he had it in him. It has drive, feeling, and some swell solos, one especially good one on trombone by Ziggy Elmer. Reverse is conventional stuff.

*I Told Ya I Love Ya, Now Get Out and If Anybody Can Steal My Baby*; Woody Herman and His Orchestra. Vocals by Woody Herman. Columbia 38047.

● This is a surprisingly mediocre disc for Woody. It adds nothing to his reputation.

*Gonna Get A Girl and Nagasaki*; Benny Goodman Sextet (Personnel: Benny Goodman, clarinet; Red Norvo, vibraphone; Mel Powell, piano; Louie Bellson, drums; Artie Shapiro, bass; Al Hendrickson, guitar) Capitol 15008.

*A String of Pearls and Jersey Bounce*; Benny Goodman and His Orchestra. Columbia 38062.

● Two gems, one made today; the other a few years ago. Both are honeys! *Nagasaki* and *Gonna* have that relaxed feeling which is so rare in jazz. The solos invite Hollywoodian superlatives. This record will certainly join the library of jazz classics as *Jersey Bounce* and *String of Pearls* has since the day it was issued. Columbia has done us a favor by reissuing this one because everyone's original must certainly be now worn out.

*Love Is So Terrific and Dream Girl*; Les Brown and His Orchestra. Vocals by Ray Kellogg and Eileen Wilson. Columbia 38060.

● This one's just good—nothing to rave over.

*The Secretary Song and I'm My Own Grandpaw*; Tony Pastor and His Orchestra. Vocals by Tony Pastor and The Clooney Sisters. Columbia 38068.

● Both clever comic songs with different brands of humor. The first is inspired by the clattering rhythm of typewriter keys and the second is a hillbilly about a terribly mixed-up family

affair. Dorothy Shay's *Uncle Fud* started something. Enjoyably done and well recorded.

*The Dance of the Blue Danube and The Trumpets Have Triplets*; Columbia 38056. *Now Is the Hour and I'll Never Say I Love You*; Columbia 38061. Horace Heidt and His Musical Knights. Vocals by Donna and Her Don Juans, Barbara O'Brien, and The Masked Spooner.

● Horace Heidt can usually be depended upon for an entertaining, if not sensational, record. This time the entertainment is quite varied. Strauss supplied the theme for the first number but he doesn't get any label credit. It is a mildly good dance piece. *The Trumpets Have Triplets* is an excuse to show off his trumpet section and it gives a good account of its ability. Incidentally, the *Blue Danube* label says: "featuring The Three Trumpeters." Surely, this belongs on the *Triplets* label which doesn't feature anyone. *Now Is the Hour* is a dance version of the *Maori Farewell Song*. It makes very pleasant listening. The reverse is spoiled by a lugubrious mooner who calls himself The Masked Spooner. He delivers a sickening vocal chorus in *parlando* style. If you disregard this side, the program is enjoyable.

*An Old Sombrero and You Don't Have To Know the Language*; Xavier Cugat and His Orchestra, with Buddy Clark. Columbia 38046.

● These are "fox-trots", not Latin-American dances. Cugat is too good a musician to ever turn out anything really bad, but this isn't what we want from him. Others can do them better. Rhumbas, congas, sambas! Those are his forte!

*Retour des saisons and Tombe du ciel*; Charles Trenet, tenor, with Orchestra conducted by Albert Lasry. Columbia 4502-M.

● Once before in this column, I believe I called Charles Trenet "American womanhood's heart-throb from Europe who was a menace to Sinatra, Como, and company." On this record he is again all charm, sex, and insinuating seduction. He is like a male Lucienne Boyer. 'Nuff said!

*But Beautiful and Night and Day*; Musicraft 538. *Love, You Funny Thing and I'll Always Be In Love With You*; Musicraft 529. *I Can't Give You Anything But Love, Baby and Three Little Words*; Musicraft 528. *Fine and Dandy and The Day You Came Along*; Musicraft 530. Mel Tormé, with Orchestra.

● After Charles Trenet, these are a sorry lot. No voice, no style. It's difficult to understand some regard him in the same class with Sinatra and Como. There just isn't any comparison between this labored vocalizing and the smooth, effortless singing of his contemporaries.

*Happy Birthday Polka and Calico Apron and A Gingham Gown*; Sons of the Pioneers. Victor 20-2725.

● One of the best cowboy groups recording today. The polka is catchy; the other is typically Western. Nice recording.

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